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ABSTRACT

In this summary of a dissertation, results of a study of teachers providing bilingual education at a Navajo border town school are reported. Teaching Navajo language and culture in a bordertown school may require much more than language and culture content knowledge, although it is a prerequisite. Teachers must also be aware of family education histories, students' home situations, socioeconomics, the importance of English for much economic success, and school politics and policies on bilingual education. Positive cross-cultural experiences and positive experiences with bilingual education were reported by a number of teachers who were teaching or willing to teach Navajo language and culture. Teachers who have a strong personal conviction of the value of bilingual methods are enthusiastic about using them. An appropriate training program for teachers of schools with bicultural policies might include learning both content and methods in the languages and cultures involved, training for attitude development, the developing a personal philosophy of bicultural education, and learning about and experiencing cross-cultural understanding of self and others. Teachers from both Navajo- and English-speaking cultures have a contribution to make to such programs. Suggestions for further research are provided. (DP)

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TEACHER TRAINING IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Handout from the presentation: Howard, Roy. E. "Developing Positive Teacher Attitudes Towards Using Native Language", Texas Association for Bilingual Education Confererence", October 22, 1987, Corpus Christi, Texas.

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from:

Roy Edward Howard. Navajo Bilingual Education in Action, A Qualitative Study of Teachers at a BIA Bordertown School. PhD Dissertation, The University of New Mexico, May, 1987.

This report summarizes the findings of the referenced dissertation study with regard to teacher motivation and implementation of Navajo bilingual and bicultural education. External social factors are presented as a context for the study and as probable types of key knowledge for all teachers in a bicultural environment. It is suggested that personal motivation to teach Navajo language and culture in a bordertown school may require much more than language and culture content knowledge. The exercise has led the researcher to dare to present recommendations. Each recommendation and hypothesis presented herein is an invitation and a challenge to other researchers for further study, replication or even quantitative validation. Conclusions regarding prerequisites for implementation of the bilingual policies at Rising Rock school are based on the premise that the goodwill and support of every sector of the school and community is needed and that they are more likely be supportive if they cooperate in the design and implementation of the program (Brisk, 1979).

EXTERNAL SOCIAL FACTORS

History. A study of the history of Indian Education gives important clues concerning the attitudes of parents and educators today. Teachers should be aware of the types of educational experiences that the parents and grandparents of their students have had. Among them there will likely be a wide range of school experiences from little to much, from boarding school to public school, from mission school to placement in foster homes. They will also find that people have reacted differently to similar

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experiences. Some want their children to not have the problems with English that they did, so they try to avoid using Navajo with their children. Others want their children to not feel as badly about themselves as they did, so they try to avoid losing Navajo with their children. Teachers should be aware of the nature of the process of culture transition and learn to work with the community in achieving proper goals with regard to teaching and appreciating the continuing history of the people.

Demography and Geography. It is important for the teachers to have a sense of the home situation of the students in order to teach from a relevant perspective. Students who live in or near town may have different life experiences than those who live in isolated areas. Those with working parents may have different orientations towards school values than those living a more traditional life. Teachers in this study disagreed as to whether the Navajo speaking students were better or worse off with regard to preparation for school, and even about how many were Navajo speakers. Language assessment tests may be useful in identifying student strengths and weaknesses with regard to the school language policy. Appropriate involvement of parents in curriculum planning may make both the parents and the teachers feel better about the bicultural goals of the school.

Socioeconomics. Rising Rock parents react naturally to the social and economic pressures of the community in emphasizing only English to their children. Parents and teachers should be made aware of the nature of this process in the lives of their students. Fears about the Navajo language having a negative influence on the children may be assuaged by knowledge about the successful results of bilingual programs in other areas. The people need more information before making decisions regarding assimilation or integration. They need to be more aware that bicultural integration is a choice; they do not need to fear, as some do now, that the only choices are to go forward or to go back. They need to believe that a planned, coordinated effort involving both the school and the family is the only way that a goal of biculturalism could be achieved.

Politics and Policies. Schools distribute values. The Rising Rock experience illustrates that those values passed on to the children are more likely to be those of the teachers than those of the published policies. The published Rising Rock policies are clearly in favor of teaching Navajo language to the children, recognizing that they are now mostly English-only speakers. The school

policies also advocate knowledge and respect for Navajo traditions, history and government. The time that teachers take as well as their unspoken attitudes greatly affect student acquisition of skills and attitudes in Navajo language and culture. Policies would have to be enforced by the administration and participated in by the parents and teachers before they could become a reality. Teachers are less likely to support innovations if they do not participate in decisions and planning from the beginning. The current course of federal and state governments does not portend a constant source of financial help for bilingual programs. Local level initiatives may be those most likely to succeed.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION FACTORS

What Spolsky, Green, and Read (1974) call "psychological factors", I list as personal experiences, teacher training and expectations of others. Early schooling, travel and experiences with divergent cultures, working at different types of jobs, and college training all were mentioned by informants as types of events that affected their current attitude towards bicultural education. Actual implementation was also affected by how the teachers perceived the attitudes of others, including parents, students and other teachers.

In the study, teachers often mentioned a concern for inadequacies in culture knowledge or fear of objections to religious topics. Part of that problem is that every aspect of Navajo culture can be traced to some religious belief. One teacher stated, "if they insist on teaching Navajo traditional mythology, I demand equal time to give the Christian viewpoint". This same teacher had a copy of "Odysseus' Travels", of Greek Mythology, on the shelf for the kids to read. The difference, he said, is that Navajo culture is too close, geographically and historically to study objectively. On the other hand, the Navajo Area School Board Association is so concerned about the use of alcohol and illegal drugs at community events, that in a March, 1987 letter they practically insisted that schools teach respect for traditions. Although the issue may be too close to study objectively, it is also too close to ignore. Teachers need to resolve the differences between their Christian conviction and the ties to their heritage. They need to find a way to be objective about the realities of a bicultural community and learn to prepare the students to deal with all the challenges and opportunities they face.

Teachers need to be aware of the sociolinguistic processes that affect their students' lives. Parents may be

unknowingly limiting their childrens' early language acquisition by avoiding communication with them. Teachers should understand how to deal with semilingualism and reservation English as levels of language proficiency. Parents should be encouraged to engage in many kinds of interactive communication with their children, in whatever language they know best. Parents should also encourage their children to speak a second language if they have one themselves. Children automatically learn the language that has high status with their friends; they will learn the other language only if it is given a high enough status. Languages, like music, are good to learn for their own sakes, not only because of practical or economical value. In the case of Rising Rock, English is a given, it is automatic; however, the Navajo language will not be spoken by the children unless the parents and teachers work to give it a higher status than they now do.

TEACHER TRAINING

Personal Experiences

Among their recommendations for training teachers in minority education, Gonzales and Ortiz (1977) include the competencies: be able to recognize how one's personal values, attitudes, and expectations may influence one's own behavior towards minority-speaking, culturally different children; and the ability to facilitate contacts and interaction between the learner's family and school personnel; and participation in a "cross-cultural" experience during the teacher training period as a condition for teacher certification. These special cross cultural experiences may occur at anytime in a teacher's life and may be more significant in teacher preparation than cognitive or content competencies (Furuto and Furuto, 1983).

Whatever attitudes the teachers have now may have been developed in their early experiences as they attended school and learned empathy or apathy for certain languages or people. Positive cross cultural experiences and/or positive experiences with bilingual education were reported by a number of teachers who were "willing" or "doing" language and culture instruction. These findings seem to support the recommendations of Gonzales and Ortiz and Furuto and Furuto.

Language and Culture Training

Taking courses in Navajo language and culture and in bilingual and multicultural methods does not seem to guarantee teacher implementation. However, teachers with

an adequate background in Navajo language and culture will be more likely to take initiatives in bilingual methods in their classrooms. Language and culture training is a prerequisite to teacher involvement in the program. Currently, teachers in the Rising Rock area travel long distances to attend such classes. As the demand for training increases, delivery of such training will likely become more convenient.

Foundations of Bicultural Education

The Doers obviously believe that Navajo is good for the kids, but the others apparently do not believe in it enough to implement it. It would seem that only those teachers who have a strong personal conviction of the value of bilingual methods will be enthused about using them. Teacher training should emphasize the positive aspects of two language learning. The literature contains both points of view. One of the teachers agreed with Rudall (1986), a college professor, who stated in the journal, Reading Improvement, that native teachers were not the best bilingual teachers. In his "15 years in bilingual education" he had concluded that teachers of ESL students should be native English speakers. He considers the native speakers to be poor English language models. To him, success in English should be the primary goal of bilingual education. In contrast, most research shows that the students in two language programs participate more in class, feel better about themselves, achieve higher scores in English language tests and compete better in the mainstream because their class instruction is culturally and linguistically relevant (Willig, 1985). Native teachers are particularly equipped for part of this job, but a teaching staff of wide ranges of backgrounds would be able to provide students with the wide range of perspectives that they need. Bilingual means two languages and bicultural means two cultures, therefore, teachers from both cultures can contribute.

Knight (1972) shows in his study that teacher preparation programs should be concerned with attitude development of the teacher candidates as well as content and methods. The findings of the present study also support the idea that content instruction is not enough. Preservice and inservice teachers who are being prepared for service in schools with bicultural policies should participate in positive experiences designed to help them feel good about functioning successfully in varying cultural contexts. The present study suggests that they should learn about the processes of cross cultural interaction in the context of history, demography, geography, socioeconomics, politics, sociolinguistics, psychology, culture and religion

(foundations of bilingual education). Those who write about competencies for bilingual teachers specify language and culture content and teaching methods, and attitude and values orientation (Sandoval, 1980). However, they only generally mention those areas which I call "foundations". See Appendix H for a summary of bilingual competencies mentioned in the literature organized into the outline of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following statements are supported by the data and literature search associated with this study. Further research is needed to determine whether these tentative conclusions may be reliable or useful in other settings. Each recommendation should be considered a type of "substantive theory", rather than a confirmed prescription (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). The statements are divided according to whether they seem to predict or seem not to predict teacher attitude and teacher behavior. Other findings that should be tested further are also listed.

a. Teacher Attitude <u>Seems Not To Be</u> Predicted By:

1. type of school attended

2. whether they were punished for using their own language

3. whether they have trouble teaching their own children their language at home.

b. Teacher attitude <u>seems to be</u> predicted by:

1. whether a teacher had positive experiences with a bilingual program

2. whether a teacher had a previous positive experience teaching with a bilingual method

3. whether a teacher had positive cross cultural experiences

4. whether a teacher lived away from the reservation (returning with a fresh perspective on the value of the language and culture)

5. their perception about the availability of curriculum and materials

6. their perception of parent attitudes.

c. Teacher behavior <u>seems not to be</u> predicted by:

1. whether a teacher understands the level of native language ability of the students

2. whether a teacher understands the policies

3. whether the program is funded

4. level of administrative support - teachers seem to respond in varying ways to the same leadership styles

5. their perceptions of other teachers attitudes

6. teacher ethnicity.

d. Teacher behavior <u>seems to be</u> predicted by:

1. their belief in the value to the students of Navajo studies or bilingual education

2. their perception of the attitudes of parents and community members

3. their attitude towards how studying the Navajo language may affect getting a job

4. their participation in the planning step of the school program

5. participation in school inservice training from the inception of the program on campus

6. the number of courses taken in Navajo language and culture and courses in bilingual and multicultural methods

7. their perceptions of student attitudes

8. stated attitudes towards the value of culture instruction.

9. teacher behavior in culture instruction seems to be related to the degree to which they have resolved the religious questions for themselves - many teachers avoid culture topics if they think religion might be involved

e. Other Findings That Should Be Tested Further:

1. goals in language instruction were minimal, the students were not expected to learn conversational Navajo

2. the Navajo language was used for explanation, discipline, minimumly in conversation and peer teaching: this role does not encourage the students to learn and use the Navajo language

3. before the culture requirements are being taught by many teachers, they would need training in Navajo history, civics annd social studies and the curriculum would have to be designed for each grade level

4. before the teachers felt comfortable teaching culture, the appropriate culture topics for each grade level would have to be identified by a committee that included parents and community members

5. by integrating subject matter, teachers have been able to teach the regular subjects, stay on schedule and still teach Navajo language and culture topics.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

This study provides information about the attitudes of teachers at an Indian boarding school located on the border of the reservation near town, regarding an existing bilingual and bicultural education policy. Although the published policy is clearly in place at every level of the school and community hierarchy, only a few teachers have started trying to implement it. The implementers do so without the benefit of a school curriculum, or inservice training, or parent involvement, using their own personal instructional materials. Most other teachers are willing to support aspects of the policy, but have not done very much yet.

It is normal for teachers to react with hesitation to new policies or programs if they have not been involved in the policy formation or indoctrinated in the tenets of the program. This is particularly true in Indian education where programs have historically come and gone. Reservation school teachers must take a personal stand between the natural tendency towards linguistic and cultural assimilation and the school policy of bicultural integration. The assimilation process has advanced in the Rising Rock School area to the point that most of the

children do not speak the language of their grandparents. Resulting community social pressures may have a stronger influence on teacher behavior than published policies. The administration responds to such pressures at Rising Rock, with a "wait and see" type of attitude. The resulting leadership void allows those teachers who are personally motivated the freedom to be creative, but leaves the others wondering what to do.

This study describes factors of behavior that distinguish the innovative teachers. They demonstrate and proclaim a belief that teaching the local language and culture is beneficial to the children cognitively and psychologically. They tend to feel that it is possible and desirable to integrate into the mainstream biculturally. The others tend to cling (in varying degrees) to the standard they were raised with, that Indians should abandon their language and customs and assimilate into the dominant society. Some teachers even hold extreme beliefs, such as "the study of the local language might interfere with the learning of the mainstream language and prevent the children from qualifying for jobs". In some cases, such beliefs may be held over from the teachers' own school experiences of coming to school not knowing the school language and being made to feel that their language was inferior. Even though they realize that the methods they were raised with were not productive, these methods and attitudes are being perpetuated unconciously by the teachers by the way they use the two languages. The local vernacular is used (orally) by adults to discipline the unruly, explain to the slow, and to communicate socially with other adults, not with children. The mainstream language is used (orally and written) as the means and the topic of instruction and in every official and social capacity with the children. Most attempts at teaching the local language or culture are superficial and explained in the mainstream language. At best, the motivated teachers integrate local tales and lore into the regular language arts and sciences curriculum, expect the children to understand and speak the local vernacular fluently, and encourage them to read and write it using interesting story books and challenging assignments.

This study explores factors of motivation that distinguish the innovative teachers. Certainly training in the language and culture is a prerequisite. However, there are those who are trained who still hesitate to get involved in very much teaching. Bicultural teacher training should also emphasize attitude development and knowledge and skills in bilingual methods, bicultural philosophy, and a foundational understanding of external social factors affecting the population. Positive experiences in cross

cultural environments and bicultural education may be essential to the development of such attitudes. Teachers are sensitive to the expectations of others. Parents, administrators, and other teachers who are not teaching Navajo need to be involved in what the other teachers are doing and oriented to what the objectives are. All the teachers need to feel a part of the bicultural curriculum. Bicultural means two languages. There will always be a place for the English speaking teachers. Students need to be encouraged by a positive attitude demonstrated by parents and teachers so they might accept the language and culture studies.

An understanding of the processes and events in a transitioning population such as the bordertown Indian school requires a study of the common external social factors such as history, demographics, geography, socioeconomics and politics. It also requires a feeling for personal motivation factors affecting teachers, including the teachers' perception of the expectations of others.

An appropriate training program for teachers of schools with bicultural policies may include: content and methods in the languages and cultures involved, training and experiences in attitude development including experiences with successful bilingual education programs and positive cross cultural life experiences, the development of a personal philosophy of bicultural education, and a knowledge and experience with foundations of cross cultural understanding of self and others.

Effective program administration for bicultural education requires a leader who will encourage the curriculum participation and indoctrination of all concerned parties including bilingual teachers, English-only teachers, parents, community members, administrators and students.

Reservation school teachers must resolve for themselves the conflict between the tendency of parents to want linguistic and cultural assimilation for their children, and the school policy of bicultural integration. Community social pressures may be a stronger influence in teacher behavior than published policies, but personal resolve is the key to actual behavior. Half-way resolve may not be enough, because attempts at teaching the local language or culture that are superficial and explained in the mainstream language model a low status concept of the native language to the children. Parents, administrators, and teachers who are not teaching Navajo need to be involved in what the bilingual teachers are doing and oriented to what the objectives are. Students can be motivated by a positive

attitude demonstrated by parents and teachers. Administrators need to provide active leadership and involve teachers, parents and the community in materials and curriculum decisions.

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DEVELOPING POSITIVE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING NATIVE LANGUAGE

Howard, Roy E. Navajo Bilingual Education in Action, A Qualitative Study of Teachers at a BIA Bordertown School. PhD Dissertation, The University of New Mexico, May, 1987.

c Roy Edward Howard, 1987.

The study identified needs expressed by the teachers and mentioned in the literature. These needs are placed into a new model which includes three categories: teacher training, organization and policy (including materials and curriculum), and support team (including parents). See Table I for a summary of this model.

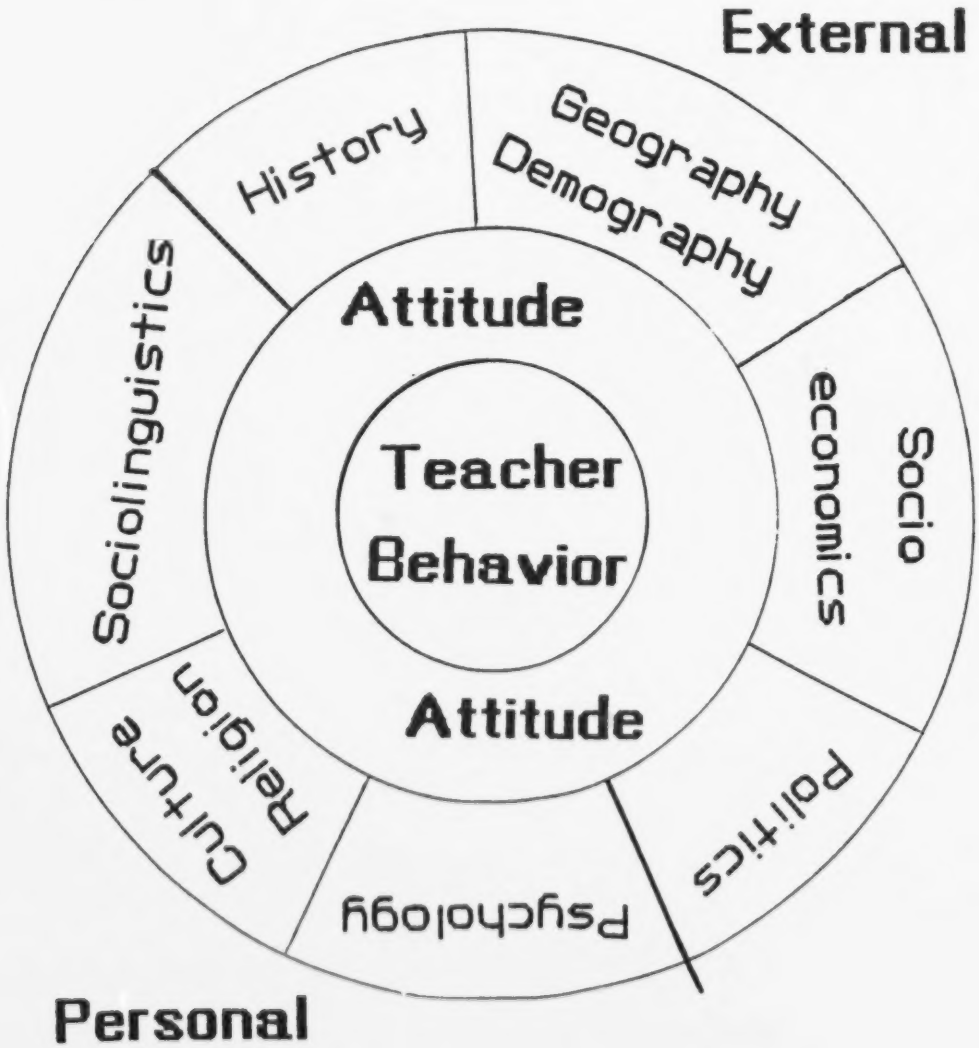
TABLE I BILINGUAL PROGRAM NEEDS

TEACHER TRAINING	PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION	SUPPORT
Experiences	Policies	Admin.
Foundations	Materials	Teachers
Language	Curriculum	Parents
Culture	Leadership	Community
Methods	Funding	Students

TABLE VIII

Model for Studying Bilingual Education

Teacher Behavior



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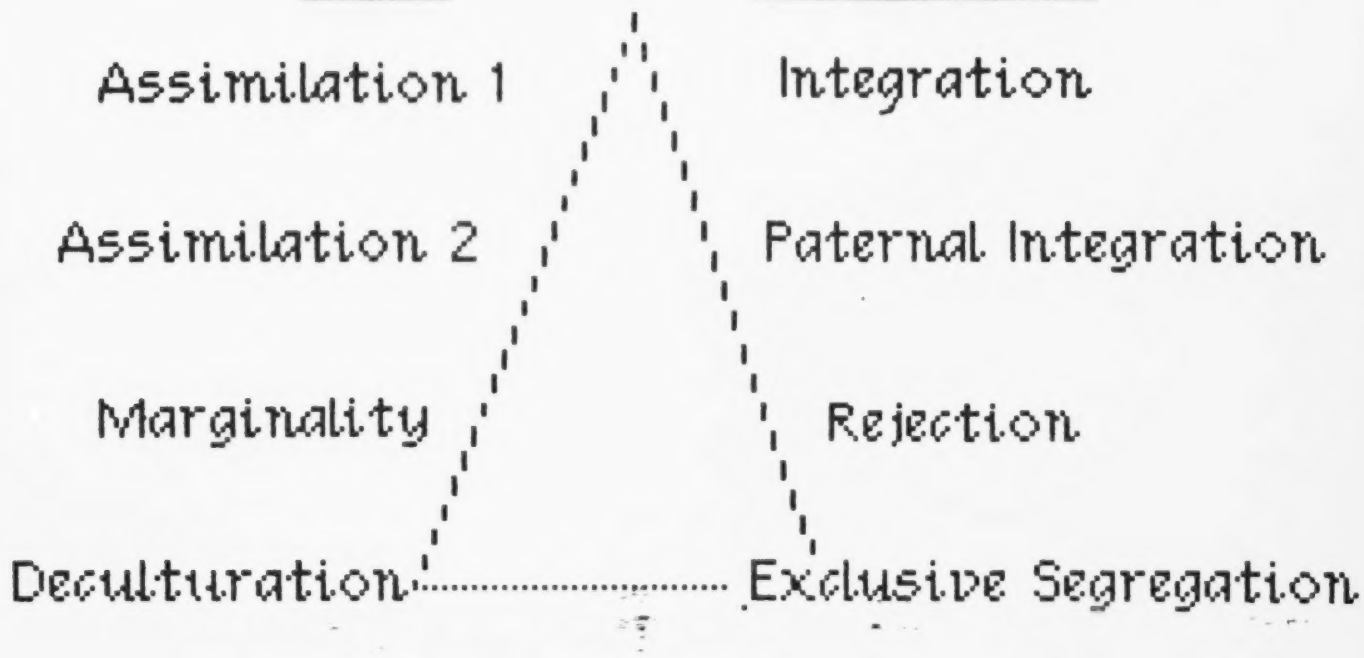
CULTURES IN CONTACT



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Continuum of Bilingual Education

Additive

Maintenance

Transitional

Sheltered English

Submersion

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